

We ended last week's notes with this triumphant conclusion on the dignity which union with Christ gives us:

The knowledge of our union with Christ provides us with great dignity. As I look to myself I see failure, sin, sometimes shame and disgrace. But that is neither the ultimate nor the whole truth about me as a Christian. No! I am united to Christ, a joint heir of His riches, a child of God. Knowing this to be the real truth about me lends grace and power to my life. (Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, Banner of Truth, p. 113)

May the Lord also bless richly this week's notes as we add to our knowledge of what union with Christ means, in terms of the inhabiting, holy, restraining grace of Christ's Spirit.

Mon/Tues: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:8-10; Romans 5:5 & Jude 1:20

Re-Created Within

We see in 1 Thessalonians 4:8 that a key antidote to sexual sin is to grasp the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. For the Christian, the most effective way to maintain sexual purity is to be reminded of the reality of the indwelling Spirit ... *to realize that we carry the Spirit of God and of Christ in our bodies wherever we go.*

But by this "indwelling" of the Spirit, we don't mean a "hall monitor" who merely punishes external, sinful action. No parent can successfully inculcate pure thoughts and desires into their child merely by the threat of the rod. No, the goal of all true nurture of children is the same as God's goal in raising us up to holy living, to speak to the heart!

In other words, God can succeed in claiming our hearts for holiness because He is able to renew our wills and persuade our hearts to *want* to be holy. Only God can reach down so deeply into our hearts as to change what we *want*! And He does this through this most fundamental doctrine of union with Christ, by which His Spirit actually takes up living with us and works faith in us from within.

Meditate and Pray: By His Spirit given to us, Christ is able to teach us not only to love each other, but also to love Him and His holiness. Oh, worship the Holy Spirit for pouring into your heart the very love of God (Rom. 5:5)! By such an outpouring, the Spirit is equipped to drive out impure affections from our hearts and replace such lusts with true love for the beauty of God's holiness. How does Psalm 29:1-2 invite us with cleansed hearts and new spiritual affections to worship and serve our Savior?

*Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
worship the LORD in the splendor (or beauty) of His holiness.*

Wednesday: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:8-10; Galatians 4:6-7 & Jude 1:20**New Affections**

Jude confidently expects the believers to be found “praying in the Holy Spirit.” Though we do not know how to pray (Rom 8:26), the Spirit helps us to pray so that our faith is “built up” (Jude 1:20). What a love-gift Christ has given us in bestowing His Spirit to indwell us. Think of what this gift means for transforming the desires of the forgiven, born-again sinner. The old preachers used a special phrase to describe such heart-renewing power from God’s love: “*the expulsive power of a new affection.*”

Marvelous! God is able to dry up and shrivel the ungodly lusts of former days by replacing them with healthy desires, new tastes, new delights, nursed and nourished by the Holy Spirit! What a “wet-nurse” the Holy Spirit proves to be in raising up a whole new family of graces to live within the (now) happy home of our hearts! Is it not a joy to add our voice “Abba Father” to the chorus of all these children of grace that now reside in our hearts? All the characters of Pilgrim’s Progress: Faithful, Hopeful, Charity, etc., – now living within us! What a wonderful clamor of holy voices and desires!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for the great blessings of being adopted into such a family of grace!

Thurs/Fri/Sat: Read Jude 1:1-3 & 1:20-23**The Watchman’s Calling**

The letter of Jude produced abiding fruit in the church. Though under threat from the lewdness and Christ-denying pride of false teachers (Jude 1:4), Jude promises that the final, enduring product for the church, in heeding his warning to “contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” will be mutual edification in the faith, as well as new and powerful prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit. All these are promised in Jude 1:20.

But that’s not all. Because Jude is a faithful watchman, he (and we) can be sure the church will be “kept in the love of God” (Jude 1:21) and able to rescue others from the fire of judgment unto a saving experience of the mercy of God. All this is promised in Jude 1:22-23.

Meditate and Pray: Please ask the Lord to help the elders and pastors of our church (both present and future) to have a keen sense of watchfulness against sin, so that we as the church are protected from the sin and deceitful lives which want to “creep in” to mar our church lives and personal lives (Jude 1:4). Here are my father’s words about the pastor as watchman:

In the pastor-prophet’s role as watchman, the need to write a letter such as Jude sometimes is unavoidable. Jude’s love for these brothers and sisters in Christ stems from true conviction. Hence, the key to the letter is found in Jude’s words that the saints are to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to them ... Note that this faith has been given or entrusted by God Himself; it has been given once for all and is not to be added to or subtracted from, and it has been entrusted to all the saints. It is not an elitist faith! It is ultimately simple, yet eternally profound. And we are reminded that this faith is not universal; It was not once for all entrusted to everybody. It has been entrusted to those who are called by God.

So, later, at the end of the letter (Jude 1:20-21) when Jude tells his friends to build themselves up in their most holy faith, he means that all of them are to be built up in that faith. This is the saints’ response to God’s love, calling, and keeping mentioned in the salutation. As Michael Green puts it in his Tyndale Series Commentary on 2 Peter and Jude, “The Christian Apostolic tradition is normative for the people of God.” (Stanton Durham, *Salutary Warnings out of Jude*, Banner of Truth, Nov. 1988)